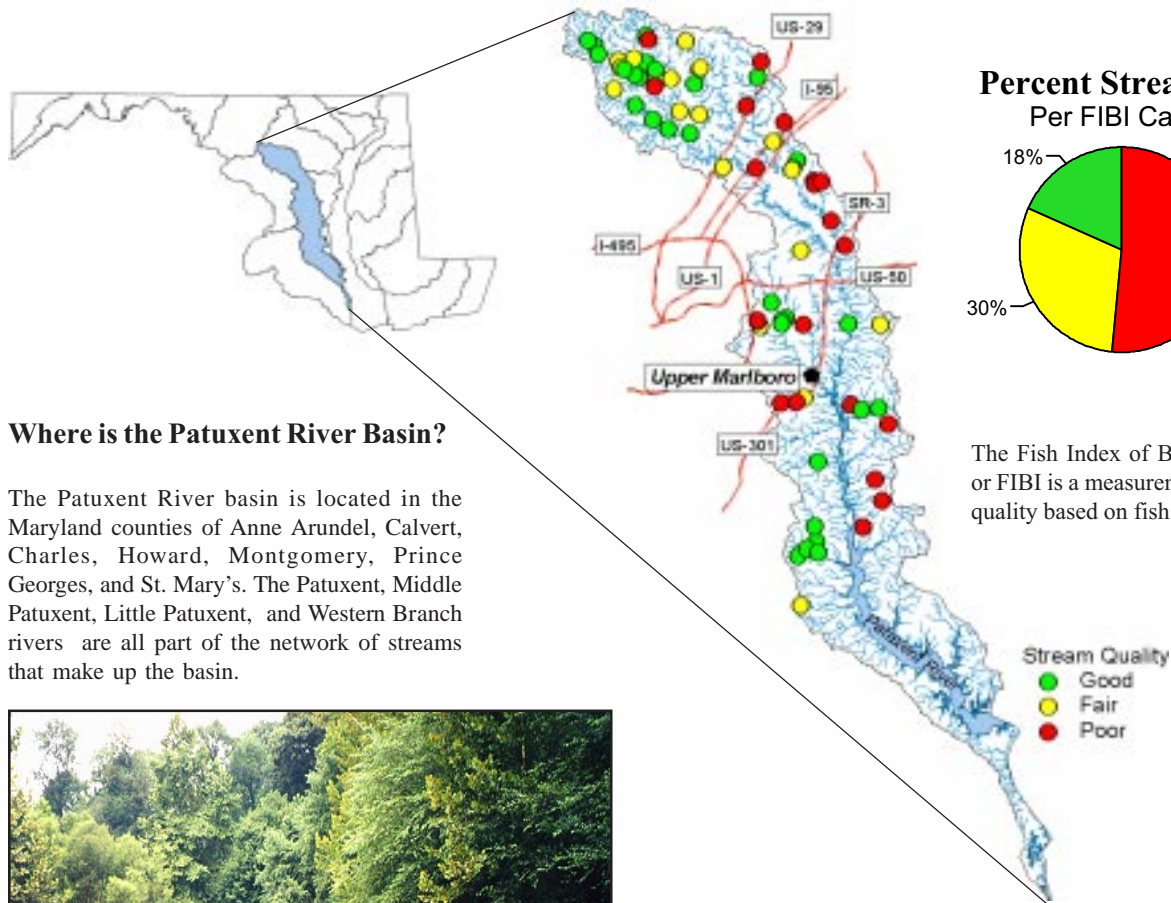




Patuxent River Basin

Current Status of Wadeable Streams



Where is the Patuxent River Basin?

The Patuxent River basin is located in the Maryland counties of Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery, Prince Georges, and St. Mary's. The Patuxent, Middle Patuxent, Little Patuxent, and Western Branch rivers are all part of the network of streams that make up the basin.



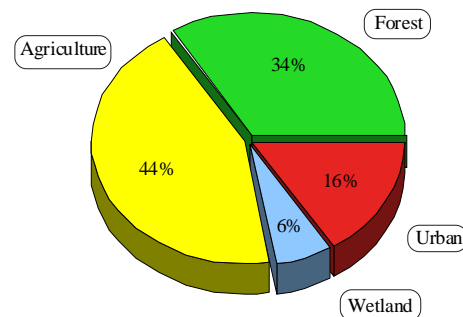
Many beautiful streams flow through the Patuxent basin.

What Lives in Our Streams? *

Estimated Fish Abundance:	1.1 million
Number of Fish Species:	44
Number of Gamefish Species:	2
Number of Reptile and Amphibian Species:	26
Number of Freshwater Mussel Species:	2

*Based on Maryland Biological Stream Survey collections in wadeable streams basin-wide during 1997.

Land Use in the Basin



Land uses in the Patuxent River basin are primarily agricultural and forest. The basin covers an area of 957 square miles, with a population density of 909 people per square mile.



Water Quality



Oxygen - 1% of the streams had oxygen levels below the state water quality standard of 5 mg/L.



Nitrate - 42% of the streams had nitrate levels that may affect aquatic life (>1mg/L). The main sources of nitrates are farm fertilizers and acid rain.



Buffering Capacity - 2% of the streams are poorly buffered against acid rain.



Good



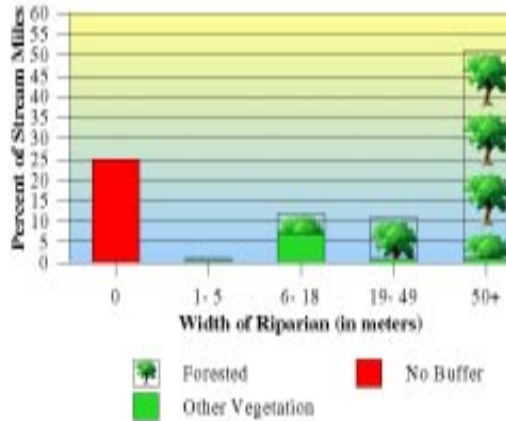
Fair



Poor

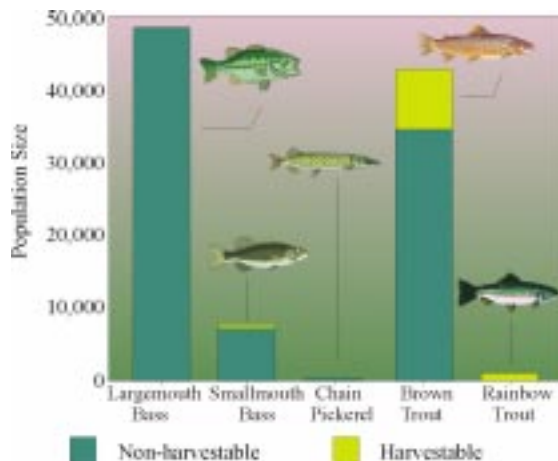
Riparian Zone

Trees, shrubs, and grasses that border a stream are called the stream's *riparian buffer*. This buffer zone can protect a stream against runoff, provides shade, stabilizes stream banks, and supplies food and shelter for aquatic life. A wide and intact buffer offers more protection than a narrow one. The riparian buffers in the Patuxent basin are in fairly good condition. We can help maintain these buffers by protecting streamside forests and planting trees in disturbed areas.



Gamefish

There are five gamefish species found in the wadeable streams of the Patuxent basin. Most of the individuals were not of harvestable size, but it does appear that the wadeable tributary streams of the basin serve as a nursery for gamefish.



Did You Know???



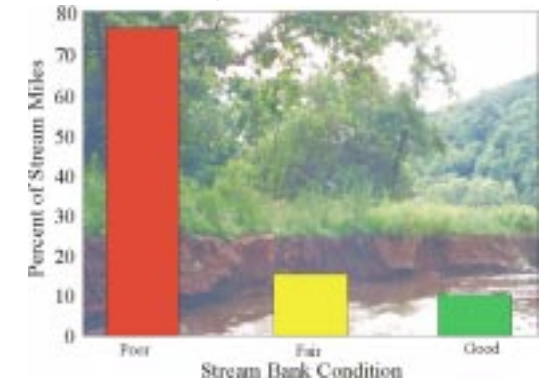
- ◆ The Patuxent River is the largest river that lies entirely in Maryland.
- ◆ The Patuxent River is the dividing line between Maryland's 410 and 301 telephone area codes.
- ◆ Bald eagles nest and overwinter in the basin.
- ◆ We may be losing an irreplaceable part of our natural heritage. At present there are at least 4 fish species in the basin that are at risk of local extinction, including American brook lamprey, glassy darter, stripeback darter, and warmouth.



The American brook lamprey, uncommon in Maryland, is found in the Patuxent basin.

Stream Bank Stability

Eroded, unstable banks reduce habitat quality in streams and contribute to water quality in downstream areas. The Patuxent basin stream banks are suffering. As lands within the basin were developed for agriculture and later urbanized, many miles of stream banks became highly eroded. Since streams in the basin flow into the Chesapeake Bay, this bank instability causes an increase in the downstream transport of nutrients and suspended sediments to the Bay.



Recreation

Popular activities in the basin include hiking, horseback riding, fishing, and canoeing. Numerous parks in the basin provide an opportunity for friends and family alike to appreciate and enjoy nature.



The Patuxent's scenic parks provide its visitors a chance to observe nature's beauty.

Community Involvement

Want to help? These community groups can show you how!

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
6600 York Road, Suite 100
Baltimore, MD 21212
Kathleen Millan (410) 377-6270

Hunting Creek Watershed Management
P.O. Box 279
Huntingtown, MD 20639
Jack Leighty (410) 535-5870

Citizens Monitors of St. Mary's County
General Delivery
St. Mary's City, MD 20686
Nancy Smith (301) 862-0405

Friends of St. Leonard Creek
P.O. Box 308
Lusby, MD 20657
Joan Wohlgemuth (410) 326-3626



For more detailed information on streams in the Patuxent River basin and elsewhere in Maryland, contact Ann Smith of DNR/MANTA at (410) 260-8611 or email asmith@dnr.state.md.us.